Measures to influence and dissolve youth groups

Signature: BArch , MfS , JHS , No. 23983, pages 4-11

Excerpt from training material of the "Law University" Potsdam with **advice on influencing and dissolving youth groups**.

The Stasi was heavily preoccupied with the "anti-social behavior" of young people.

At the "Law Academy," the Ministry for State Security's (MfS) college in Potsdam,
Stasi officers, under the guise of academic research, explored ways to influence or disband undesirable youth groups.

The present document is an excerpt from Stasi training materials from 1982.

The document was titled: "The Preventive Prevention, Investigation, and Combating of the Hostile Misuse of Anti-Social Behavior Among Young People in the GDR – Lesson for Central Political-Operational Training."

The pages selected here, in particular, clearly illustrate the measures the secret police employed to combat undesirable youth groups and the objectives they pursued.

GDR: German Democratic Republic
JHS: Law School of the Ministry for State Security
Stasi: Ministry for State Security (MfS)
Stasi: State security

1. Political-operational measures for the dissolution and transformation of groups of young people with antisocial behavior

In political-operational work with young people, it has become apparent that antisocial behavior among young people primarily occurs within

- hostile and negative associations
  - within existing or emerging groups.

This fact necessitates that political-operational work pay closer attention to the formation and development of such

- groups and
- associations of young people.

To prevent their effectiveness,

- political-operational measures must be initiated,
- resulting in the
  - dismantling,
  - dissolution, or
  - positive transformation of such groups or associations of young people.

Such measures, which include
  - the deployment of informants,
  - the application of other operational means and methods, as well as
  - the utilization of the resources of partners in political-operational cooperation,
- should primarily target young people who assume a leadership role within these groups or associations and who exert a hostile and negative influence on other young people.

At the same time, however, measures must also be initiated that aim to address the group or association as a whole.

A key objective in addressing groups or associations of young people with antisocial behavior is their dissolution.

Favorable opportunities for this often arise from the fact that, due to
  - differing interests,
  - significant differences in age and life experience,
  - the effects of political-ideological subversion,
  - contact politics/activity, and
  - other
- hostile influences are not equally evident in all group members.

Furthermore, phenomena such as
  - the short-term self-dissolution of groups,
  - the constant emergence of new groups, and
  - the movement of individuals between multiple groups
- offer specific starting points for group- and person-oriented subversion measures.

What are the goals of dissolving the group?

The primary objective is
- to eliminate the negative influence,
  - particularly that of its leaders, and
- to deprive the individual young people involved of
  - the conditions and
  - the most significant sphere of influence for further antisocial behavior.

However, the initiation of
  - political and
  - operational measures, combined with
  - measures aimed at further social influence,

- is not intended to be a purely formal, external dissolution of the group as a short-term success.

Rather, by eliminating the influence of the leaders and preventing their meetings, the goal is to initiate long-term changes in the
  - thinking,
  - behavior,
  - lifestyle, and
  - personality of the individual young people,
- thereby preventing the formation of new groups or factions.

What measures are necessary?

From a political and operational perspective, the necessary measures to dismantle the group require limiting and eliminating the negative influence of its leaders.

Operational experience indicates that these leaders are typically young people
- who are constantly present within the group,
- whose negative personality traits exert a strong influence,
- who act decisively, and
- who give the group its goals and direction.

Due to their own negative role models,
- such young people are capable of
  - inciting and stirring up the majority of the group's members,
    - especially after copious amounts of alcohol,
- to engage in
  - negative behavior,
  - rowdy behavior,
  - mobbing, and
  - even hostile activities.

What political and operational measures should be initiated to eliminate the influence of the leaders?

To limit the hostile and negative influence of identified leaders on young people with antisocial behavior, measures must be implemented, primarily through
the proactive deployment of unofficial forces,
to dismantle the
reputation and
prestige of the leaders within the group.

This can be achieved, among other things, through measures such as
- systematically exposing them,
- instigating disputes with
  - discriminatory,
  - true or credible,

- verifiable and
- irrefutable accusations...

This can also include measures that
- exploit the personal weaknesses of leaders to
  - create and intensify
    - tensions,
    - conflicts, and
    - rivalries within the group,
    - such as disputes over
      - leadership,
      - the pursuit of selfish interests,
      - the acquisition of female members, or
      - disagreements about potential goals, planned activities, etc.

In addition to the targeted use of informants, a number of other suitable measures can be initiated to weaken the leader's position or remove him from the group.

These include, among others, measures such as...
- the accelerated conduct of criminal proceedings and
  - their evaluation with the participation of group members,
- the targeted exposure of the leader's personality in public criminal and other proceedings,
  - which has discriminatory effects on his followers and
  - makes him appear not as a "martyr" but as a "failure",
- the targeted, differentiated use of the legal options available to state bodies, such as
  - residence restrictions and bans,
  - withdrawal of identity cards,
  - mandatory employment,
  - subscription into the NVA or reserve service,
  - prohibition of contact with persons and
  - reporting obligations to childcare providers.

Even apart from criminal proceedings, greater use should be made of ways to alter the personal reputation of leaders and to curtail their influence.

Such measures must be aimed at portraying the leaders as
  - "insecure,"
  - "corruptible,"
  - "dishonest," etc. , within their social circles,
- in order to create
  - insecurity,
  - alienation, and
  - a loss of orientation among group members.

The opportunities arising from the relationships between group members should also be utilized more effectively.

They require

Their main purpose is
- the offensive use of informants in groups and
- they serve to develop and deepen differences between members.

Depending on his position and personal qualifications, the informant should
- aim to win over some group members,
  - potentially forming a subgroup or dividing the participants based on characteristics such as
    - a need to communicate,
    - sociability,
    - ambition, or
    - a sense of justice.

The informant can also be used to deliberately expose specific lies and breaches of promise by group members.

Favoring or rejecting individual young people can also be used to instigate conflicts.

Likewise, the application of
  - unofficially obtained and
  - otherwise readily available information
- is to be used to restrict and disrupt group norms.

To initiate such measures, the specific influence of
  - the DVP,
  - local state bodies and
  - other educational institutions
- should also be used in a targeted manner.

What options are available for this?

Measures in the education and employment sector to
- make participation in meetings more difficult,
- official communication and instruction regarding known negative behavior,
- Multiple targeted summonses to
    - the police station,
    - to school,
    - company, and
    - sports facilities,
  - combined with instructions and requirements,
- a repeated monitoring of
  - known concentration points,

  - meeting places or quarters with
- simultaneous, intentionally different treatment of the individual young people,
- constant monitoring of compliance with the imposed conditions.

Besides dissolution, there is also the possibility of positively transforming a grouping or group.

Under what conditions can a group be positively transformed?

The method of positive transformation is possible with groups of people in whom
- negative personality traits are less concentrated,
- hostile-negative behaviors occur only temporarily or sporadically, and
- the individuals have daily or frequent personal contact with one another.

Tactical measures of repeated geographical dispersal (or "dispersal") usually prove ineffective if
- the young people involved come from, for example,
  - a school class,
  - an apprentice dormitory,
  - a workplace, or
  - a residential area.

What is the goal of positive transformation?

Political-operational measures of transformation primarily serve the purpose of
- the
  - political,
  - ideological and
  - moral
- re-education of young people with antisocial behaviors,
- their permanent disciplining and thus
- the elimination of the conditions inherent in these groups and factions that favor hostile activity.

The hostile misuse of antisocial behavior among young people can be prevented primarily through active influence on the consciousness and lifestyle of this group.

Therefore, measures aimed at dissolving and transforming groups and organizations must complement each other.

What political and operational measures are necessary for the transformation?

In coordination with the partners in political-operational cooperation, the transformation of groups as well as the re-

- The recruitment of individual young people of operational interest
  - is particularly necessary
- the early and rapid elimination of the effects of hostile-negative persons

    - in and around the group or group.
- The transformation of the negative character of certain negative youth groups and
- their acceptance of socially acceptable behavior is largely determined by
    - the behavior of the leader(s) of the youth group in question.
    - Positive behavioral changes by other influential figures outside the group, such as
        - members of a particular musical group,
        - disco entertainers,
        - singer-songwriters, or
        - fairground performers,
        - can also have a disciplining effect.
    - The increase in the effectiveness of positive influencing factors on the majority of adolescents belonging to a group or subgroup.

In this context, the efforts of the partners in political-operational cooperation must be strengthened and mobilized in order
- to eliminate all conditions that promote antisocial behavior among young people and
- to actively implement the necessary educational measures in line with the party's youth policy.

Above all, those responsible for education must be guided towards the rapid overcoming of such specifically identified deficiencies, such as
- mistrust and indifference towards primitive, socially disadvantaged youths,
- disregard for regulations and stipulations regarding the reintegration of young people,
- rejection of negative, sometimes previously convicted, young people when they intend to work in collectives and brigades,
- discrimination against and insults directed at young people because of socially unacceptable behavior or outward peculiarities in appearance and clothing,
- avoidance of necessary discussions and suppression of criticism, and
- coercion of formal, dishonest statements.

Regarding committed violations of norms,
- exclusively linguistic influence
- instead of necessary tasks and practical active involvement of these young people in reparations, etc.

In addition to addressing such educational shortcomings, the partners involved in this collaboration must, in a case-specific manner,
- focus on differentiated questions
    - regarding the material and organizational measures
        - necessary to ensure the positive inclusion of such groups of young people.

This includes, for example,
- raising the cultural level and strictly adhering to youth-friendly regulations
    - in certain leisure centers,
    - restaurants,
    - sports clubs, at
    - dances, and

- other social events that are particularly attractive to young people with antisocial behavior.
- the targeted, individual and uniform influence
  - on individual young people in groups or groups in which there is an operational interest.

Such measures include,

- in addition to the sometimes operationally expedient
  - recruitment of the young person as an informant, in particular
  - the unofficially secured reconnaissance of the person, in particular
    - their attitudes towards the group and
    - the customs prevailing there,
    - their attitudes towards the norms of social coexistence,
    - their attitudes towards personal friends as well as
    - towards the DVP and other security bodies,
  - direct influences to
    - eliminate negative thought and behavior patterns,
      - which can be achieved both through
        - personal contact of the operational employee (eg, in preventive talks or otherwise disguised) and through
        - informants or official confidants
          - (this also includes the organization and assumption of sponsorships by companies, teachers, education students, youth officials , etc.),

Further, individualized influences that,

- in principle,
- raise doubts about the person's own negative attitudes and ways of thinking, and
- at the same time help to resolve conflicts.

Assistance with immediate, practical changes in lifestyle

- (eg, separation from politically negative parents,
- organization of apprenticeship completion,
- fulfillment of an obligation),
- thereby opening up a personally acceptable development perspective for the young person.

Use of appropriate means of persuasion, including

- compromising material,
  - which is understandable to the person concerned and
- has an initial confidence-building effect.
- the continuation of the influences until
  - the person is removed from the group or
  - until the positive transformation of the group is successful.

[End of excerpt]